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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1729

INFO RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 8410

RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 4435

RUEHGP/AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE PRIORITY 7361

RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA PRIORITY 3128

RUEHGZ/AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU PRIORITY 0011

RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA PRIORITY 0872

RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA PRIORITY 5468

RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE PRIORITY 6920

RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO PRIORITY 3668

RHMFIUU/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RULSDMK/DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RHMFIUU/TSA HQ WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RHMFIUU/5AF YOKOTA AB JA PRIORITY

RHMFIUU/US CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 000658

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR S/ES-O/CMS, EAP/J, EEB/TRA
STATE PASS FAA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [FAIR](#) [CASC](#) [PREL](#) [JA](#)

SUBJECT: FEDEX AIR CRASH IN TOKYO: SITREP 3

REF: A. TOKYO 639
[B.](#) TOKYO 646

[¶](#)1. (U) Summary: Narita Airport's Runway A, where a FedEx aircraft crashed on March 23, has re-opened and resumed operations. The temporary closure of runway A affected both Japanese and foreign airlines' international flights, resulting in delays, diversions, and crowded conditions at airport terminals and local hotels. However, not all airlines' international flights were affected, and Post recommends passengers traveling in and out of Tokyo confirm with the airline or with Narita Airport regarding flight status. End summary.

Runway A Re-Opened

[¶](#)2. (SBU) Narita Airport's Runway A, where the accident occurred, re-opened at 0910hrs local time March 24, according to Northwest Airlines Senior Advisor for Air Traffic Management and Industry Affairs Kazuo Nakata. Airport crews have removed the wreckage, and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT) Civil Aviation Bureau (JCAB) has inspected the runway surface and edge lights, said Nakata. The JCAB informed airline operators that all runway maintenance is complete, according to United Airlines Narita Airport Flight Dispatch Office Manager Yoko Ohno. The runway is functioning normally from the airport's perspective, but due to delays and cancellations yesterday, the airlines are still experiencing congestion and delays, said Narita Airport Executive Advisor to the President, Hiroshi Tanaka.

Effect on Airport Operations

[¶](#)3. (U) Local media reported some flights were diverted to Hokkaido's New Chitose Airport, Tokyo's Haneda Airport, and Aichi Prefecture's Chubu Airport. Given crowded conditions at local hotels, over 600 passengers had to "camp out" in Narita Airport's terminal buildings, according to newspaper reports.

[¶](#)4. (SBU) Media coverage noted that Japan Airlines (JAL)

canceled a total of 50 international flights, and ANA canceled 12 flights, affecting a total of 20,000 passengers. Foreign air carriers reportedly canceled 41 flights. Continental Airlines, which does not use 747 aircraft, was able to adjust to the runway closure and experienced no effect on short-haul flights to Guam, a Continental Airlines executive told the CDA March 23. On long-haul flights, the airline was able to use the shorter Runway B by neither taking on cargo nor boarding "non-revenue" passengers (e.g., airline employees), both of which reduced fuel usage. Out of Continental's six arrivals March 23, five were on-time, the executive said.

¶ 15. (SBU) The two Northwest Airlines cargo flights diverted to Yokota Air Base (flights 901 and 907) are scheduled to depart March 24, according to a Yokota official.

FedEx and NTSB Teams

¶ 16. (SBU) Due to the extended curfew at Narita Airport, the FedEx team arrived at Narita Airport's runway B at 0200hrs March 24, rather than flying into Yokota Air Base, according to a Yokota official. A NTSB and FAA team is scheduled to arrive at Narita Airport at 1607hrs local time March 24 (30 minutes ahead of the flight's scheduled arrival time) to begin their investigation. Local media reported the cause of the accident to be wind shear and noted the aircraft had been carrying flammable liquid.

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¶ 17. (SBU) FedEx executives will meet with JCAB Director-General Miyashita March 24 to provide a status report on the accident, FedEx Government Affairs Senior Manager Mitsuyo Teramura told us. FedEx believes this meeting is premature, given the joint accident investigation with the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has not even begun, but FedEx will attend the meeting to thank the GOJ for its on-going support, said Teramura.

Warden Message

¶ 18. (U) Post sent the following warden message on March 23 at 1330hrs local time. Post continues to recommend that passengers traveling in and out of Tokyo confirm their flight status with the airline or Narita Airport.

Begin Text:

The crash of a FedEx cargo plane at Narita International Airport at 0650hrs local time on Monday, March 23, 2009 has temporarily disrupted the arrival and departure of some large, wide-bodied commercial passenger flights while cleanup and investigation of the crash continues. The FedEx plane crashed on the longer of Narita's runways, which remains closed as of this report. The airport is currently operating with only one runway.

If you are scheduled to depart on any flight out of Narita International Airport, or meet arriving passengers at Narita, the U.S. Embassy recommends checking with the airline or Narita International Airport at this online site (<http://www.narita-airport.jp/en/flight/today.html>) to confirm the status of all arriving and departing flights.

End Text.
ZUMWALT